

The Nabob Cops of Gotham and Their Graft.

(Special Correspondence.)

With a sort of cynical eagerness New York is looking forward to revelations that are promised soon in the courts of the real wickedness of the police force. Of course it will be shocking, but New York enjoys once in a while the sensation of being shocked at its own wickedness. A person can be as good as he pleases in this great metropolis of the west or as bad as he pleases—nobody will interfere and the only penalty he incurs is the consequences of his own behavior.

It is promised in this case, however, that the truths to be revealed will even go so far as to stir the city out of its cynicism. There is no doubt that a shrewd political game is being played with the purpose of again defeating Tammany in the fall and the reformers are trying to roll up all the evidence they can to coax the anti-Tammany element into fusion again.

To return to the police—one who has not lived in New York for the last ten years can hardly conceive of the system of blackmail that has been built up by the men sworn and paid to protect the public. The police, in fact, have been, to a great extent, an agency to spread vice and crime, instead of checking it.

Curiously enough behind all of the perfection of the system stand the good church people of the state. They have undertaken to make the city pure and they have passed stringent laws that nobody cared to obey. The country is decidedly for blue laws and the city is first as decidedly for the liberality of the cities of continental Europe. The country made the laws for the city and the city has simply laughed at them.

It was this conflict that certain policemen about twenty or thirty years ago saw an opportunity to profit. According to the sentiment of the city they could permit places of various kinds to be run in defiance of the law. According to the law they could shut these places up at will. So they made the persons who wanted to disobey the law pay for the privilege of pleasing the city.

It was not a very open thing at first, but the policemen found it a good thing and so it grew into what New York now knows as "The System." Big politicians saw what a possibility of revenue there was in control of the unlawful places and they took hold of the game. It became engrafted onto the city, with protection from such high sources that nobody concerned needed to fear to ply his trade.

All this began coming out about eight years ago when the Republican legislature sent the Lexow committee down to New York to find out what conditions really were and when Dr. Parkhurst and John W. Goff and their aides forced from various police officials admissions that they had been influenced by bribes. But much as that committee did, and it uncovered enough to turn the city over to a fusion administration and to start Theodore Roosevelt on his way to the presidency, it did not show a tithe of the actual corruption that has been coming out piece meal since Tammany regained control of the government five years ago and various leaders started out to get everything they could to lay by for a rainy day.

Under Chief Devery the "System" flourished as it never had before. Everything was put on the basis of yielding the greatest possible return from lawlessness.

For the profit of the police themselves the lowest forms of vice were left. They got their revenue from collections from women, from opium joints and from the dives that were not only permitted to flourish but were encouraged to open.

For the detectives there was another source of "graft." They consorted with the thieves and sometimes even with the burglars—as has been shown—and demanded part of the proceedings of

a crime. A person who might wander into a "tenderloin" saloon in those days and show a "roll" of money was likely to be found in the streets the next morning suffering from "knockout drops." Should he complain to the police it was a favor to them, for generally they would frighten him away with a threat of exposure of his waywardness and when he was safely out of the case would insist on division of the stolen money.

On this income police officials waxed fat and wealthy. Devery accumulated a goodly fortune—estimated at almost \$500,000—in the less than four years that he was chief in "real estate" operations. Captains to whom the favorite precincts were given showed like prosperity.

For permission to keep saloons open after hours there was a regular tax which went to the various district organizations of Tammany, with other like privileges that kept the leaders from complaining.

For the big men the great "graft" was reserved, the revenue from the gamblers. It was a regular charge that they had to pay, something like \$500 a month to open a house and anything from \$100 a month to \$500 to remain open, besides occasional contributions when public senti-

ment ran too high for the consciences of the men who were extending "protection."

The pool room branch of this profession was let out to a syndicate, at the head of which were well known gamblers and they and the politicians who were associated with them are men of millions now. The policy game, which is designed to take the pennies and nickels of the poor, was let out to another syndicate, the head of which has a beautiful home in the heart of the fashionable district.

There was plenty of money to silence anybody who wanted to talk, and plenty of power to deal with those who would not take the money. The "system" was bold and defiant all through the reign of Devery, which ended a year ago. The public knew of it in a way, but nobody would tell just what it did and who were benefited. Some of the smaller ones concerned fell into the net of the law, but they kept quiet, knowing that they would be protected, and the big ones carried on their trade as usual.

Conditions practically remained the same up to about the beginning of this year. A reform administration had come into power and there was a reform police commissioner. But everybody knew that the captains were still taking money, that the gambling syndicate was still in control of the

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